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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [IZ](#)

SUBJECT: CHRISTIAN ACTIVISTS URGE STRONGER U.S. ENGAGEMENT
TO PROTECT MINORITY RIGHTS

Classified By: Ambassador Ryan C. Crocker for reasons 1.4(b) and (d).

SUMMARY

11. (C) Pascale Warda, human rights advisor to Council of Representatives (CoR) Speaker Mashadani, said in a May 15 meeting with the Ambassador that she believes the GOI is not yet capable of protecting minority rights in areas administered by the KRG, and that local KRG authorities simply do not want to do so. Warda, who recently visited Christian villages in the north, complained that her appeals to KRG PM Nechirvan Barzani and President Masoud Barzani, as well as senior GOI officials, to address the issue of Christian property rights have been ignored. She also complained of job discrimination against Christians and other minorities, particularly with regard to employment with the local security forces. Warda claimed that the KRG deals only with Christians who are aligned with it, and that the KRG will not heed GOI policies. In her view, only the U.S. can make the KRG respect the rights of minorities in the north. Warda stressed that the Christian minority's aim was to live in harmony with all the people in the region, but also believes the Christian population of Hamdaniyah wants to be under the central government, not the KRG. Furthermore, if the Kurds left the area, Christians would be capable of providing for their own security. End summary.

UNRESPONSIVE KRG LEADERSHIP

12. (C) In a May 15 meeting with the Ambassador, Pascale Warda, human rights advisor to CoR Speaker Mashadani, accused Kurds of occupying Christian lands in KRG territory particularly in Dohuk. Warda, who was accompanied by her journalist husband William Warda, recently visited villages in the north. She told the Ambassador that they were able to see first-hand the deplorable situation of Christians and other minorities in KRG territory. The most serious problem is Kurdish encroachment on, and occupation of Christian lands, which was convincing many Christians to simply leave the area. Warda has written both PM Nechirvan Barzani and KDP leader Masoud Barzani about the matter, but they have not responded. She also has tried, with no success, to enlist the help of GOI Deputy PM Barham Saleh and FM Hoshyar Zebari. According to Warda, the KRG will not listen to the GOI and has no interest in finding just solutions to minority rights violations. In her view, only U.S. pressure could effect a change in KRG behavior. The Wardas both stressed that the Christians of Hamdaniyah want to live in harmony with others in the area, but would prefer to be under GOI authority.

LAND, EMPLOYMENT, SECURITY

13. (C) The Wardas highlighted Kurdish encroachment on Christian lands through Kurdish settlement in Christian villages and confiscation of Christian lands for projects, such as the Dohuk airport, as the main problem, but also

raised employment discrimination, particularly in the hiring of local security forces. They pressed for the recruitment of all minorities, including Yezidis and Mandeans, for local security forces. The Wardas expressed confidence that Christians could protect themselves if the Kurds would leave, noting that Christians were qualified to form their own security force, particularly if they received some specialized training.

CROCKER